

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Oct. 17: Allow Jesus to illuminate your life's purpose_100404

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Allow Jesus to illuminate your life's purpose

Luke 4:42-5:11

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Living a life with purpose means living with intentionality and determination. From the beginning of time, Jesus Christ knew his purpose. When Jesus came to earth as man, he stated his purpose again and again. In Luke 4:42, Jesus said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."

Jesus' purpose was to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus knew his purpose, and he was not going to let anyone or anything distract him.

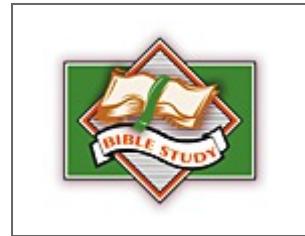
Do you ever feel God is asking you to move to a deeper level of

commitment? A new level of involvement? A new purpose? This week's lesson addresses these questions through the lives of Peter, James and John.

The story

The setting is on the Lake of Gennesaret, which also is called the Sea of Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee. Jesus' teaching was attracting great crowds, and on this particular day, the crowds were especially large.

Jesus decided to get in Simon Peter's boat and teach the crowd from the shoreline. Peter, along with John and James, the sons of Zebedee, was a commercial fisherman.



On this particular occasion, the text tells us they were pretty discouraged. They had fished all night and had not caught anything. By the time Jesus comes to them, they are washing their nets and getting things ready to be put away.

When Jesus finished teaching the crowd, he challenged Simon Peter to let down his nets into the deep water for a catch. Jesus seems to be asking a great deal of Simon Peter. After all, Peter is the professional fisherman. Peter follows Jesus' request and lets down the nets into the deep water.

The results were amazing. There were so many fish the nets were breaking. Peter, along with James and John, was so overwhelmed with the power and glory of Jesus, he realizes his own sinfulness. Jesus told to Peter not to be afraid, because his future business would not be catching fish, but catching

men.

Peter, James and John immediately left their boats and began to follow Jesus. Peter, James and John were taken away from their professional fishing occupation and given a new purpose-preaching the good news of the kingdom of God.

Living out a new purpose

Living out a new purpose involves at least three things.

First, we must be willing to listen and follow.

Jesus asked Peter to do something contrary to his knowledge about fishing. Jesus was asking Peter to trust him. Jesus desires to lead us. Jesus desires us to follow his leading.

God tells us: "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you" (Psalm 32:8). God wants to show us the best pathway for our lives. We would be wise to listen and follow.

Second, we must be willing to be risk-takers. Jesus encouraged Peter to go out into the deeper waters. We must be willing to leave our comfort zones.

A few weeks ago, a friend told me her comfort zone was anywhere God took her. I think that is a profound statement. Jesus may ask us to go out into the deep, riskier waters.

We may need to call someone and invite them to come to church. We may need to share the gospel with someone and help them cross the bridge of faith.

We may need to volunteer in some ministry of the church. We may need to heed the call of God and enter full- time vocational ministry. We may need

to go to a foreign country and help with missions.

As one author so aptly states, "The real key is that only in those deep, riskier waters are there fish, and yet in those deep waters, there is always a solid rock on which you can stand."

Are you willing to take the risk of going into the deep waters, or do you want to stay in the shallow, familiar, fishless waters?

Finally, we must be willing to be guided by our faith and not allow our fear to dictate our actions.

Jesus told Peter not to be afraid. That admonition hasn't changed. The greatest obstacle we face in life is our own fear. We are afraid of failure. We are afraid of being inadequate. We are afraid of what people will think about us.

Yet the truth of the matter is this: "God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline" (2 Timothy 1:7).

We would be wise in not allowing fear to keep us from following God's purpose for our lives.

Discussion questions

- ◆ Do you feel God is leading you to a new purpose? What is it?
- ◆ What fear is keeping you from a new purpose?
- ◆ What can you do this week in launching out into the riskier deep waters?